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Orientalism and the 'Paisley' Pattern

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IN THIS ESSAY, I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER a way of reading pattern and textile history as political and ideological. By looking at the meaning of and attitude towards the Kashmir and Paisley shawl in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and by reinterpreting the historical accounts of the shawl provided in such classic texts as Irwin's *The Kashmir Shawl*, and Rossbach's *The Art of Paisley*. I will argue that these shawls and their distinctive pattern can be considered, not as 'a pattern which unites the cultures of eastern and western hemispheres',[1] but rather as one which expresses the cultural and political appropriation, colonization and domination of the East by the West, during the period of Empire and after. In developing my analysis, I will draw on Said's critique of Orientalism as a Western academic discipline[2] and Aijaz Ahmad's important and valid criticisms of Said's text in his essay 'Orientalism and After'.[3] In so doing, I aim to offer a challenge to Mackenzie's more recent critique of Said and will maintain that the dominant Western appreciation of Eastern art and design during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was closely related to imperialism and racial attitudes.[4]

While it has been relatively easy for historians to adopt a concern for the social and political context of technical design changes,[5] research to provide cultural and political contexts for pattern has been less adequate. The birth of design history as a subject in the aftermath of industrial capitalism, and its dependence on charting the unrelenting design changes of Western consumer-based societies, takes colonialism for granted, making it imperative to reposition both the discipline and its subject matter critically within the context of post-colonial theory.[6]

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said acknowledges that it is impossible to suggest that there is such a thing as 'pure' knowledge, which contrasts itself with 'political' knowledge. All knowledge, he contests has been

> impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact. ...For if it is

1 Reilly, V. *The Paisley Pattern: The Official Illustrated History*, R. Drew, Glasgow, 1987, p.3.
2 see Said, E. *Orientalism* [1978], Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985.
3 Ahmad, A. 'Orientalsim and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said' in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literature*, Verso, London, 1992.
4 see Mackenzie, J. *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*, Manchester University Press, 1995.
5 see for example Weiner, A. and Schneider, J. (eds) *Cloth & Human Experience*, Smithsonian Institution, 1991.
6 For an introduction to post-colonial theory see Chrisma, L. and Williams, P. (eds) *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, Harvester and Wheatsheaf, 1993.

> true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second.[7]

If we can never forget the influence of other authors on a writer or the influence of his background, why then, Said rightly argues, do we ignore the broader political climate which affects us all? It is with this general thesis in mind that Said develops his critique of European writing about the East.

Orientalism is the study of the East by the West. It is not a study which has allowed for an equal cultural give and take, but is and has been a study which has not only reflected the domination of the 'East' by the 'West', but has, as an academic discipline taken part in that domination and its elaboration. Using Foucault's concepts of knowledge as a form of power, Said noted that Orientalism as an academic discipline 'not only creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different...world'.[8] Therefore, for Said, Orientalism is above all

> a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what 'we' do and what 'they' cannot 'do' or understand as 'we' do). Indeed .... Orientalism is - does not simply represent - a considerable dimension of modern political culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world.[9]

In exploring such political identities, it is also important, as Ahmad highlights, to see Orientalism as a manifestation of a particular period of history, in which Western capitalism developed and sought control of new markets through political domination, namely Empire. From the turn of the eighteenth century onwards the trade in Kashmir and Paisley shawls developed in Europe. This is not to suggest that in former periods, the relationship between

7 Ibid. p.11.
8 Ibid. p.12.
9 Ibid. p.12.

Orient and Occident cannot be analysed in relation to political and economic power, but it renders it impossible to propose as Said does, an almost constant form of identity between what are effectively two mythical geographical areas of 'East' and 'West'. We must remember that the Orient, as a mythical geographical entity in European thought, has moved to sometimes mean North Africa, sometimes the Middle East, sometimes India, or sometimes China or Japan, depending on Europe's political and economic interests and engagements. In this way the 'Orient' was interpreted by and for Europe. As Ahmad points out, it is impossible to outline the existence of 'an epistemic construction - traversing the whole breadth of 'Western' history and its textualities'.[10] Such an idea is a-historical. However, while Said refers to a relationship between 'East' and 'West' which stretches back to Ancient Greece, his book also deals almost entirely with the period of Empire and it is his analysis of this period which other scholars have cited, even when dealing with more extensive historical surveys.[11]

The key historical moment which Said uses to highlight the birth of modern Orientalism is that of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. During this invasion Napoleon not only took an army of soldiers to Egypt, but also an army of savants or scholars, to collect information about the country. This information was not simply collected to satisfy a general desire for knowledge, but formed part of the military campaign and aimed 'to render [Egypt] completely open, to make it accessible to European scrutiny.'[12] Further, in the process of accumulating and interpreting the knowledge collected by and for Europe, the 'Orient' or the 'East' (where ever it was) began to be used to epitomise everything that was not the West. If the 'Orient' was irrational, emotional, violent, subjective, autocratic and crumbling, Europe as its opposite acquired the attributes of rationality, objectivity, restraint, democracy, dynamism and order. The assertion of these opposites left Europe as the rightful and just ruler of other nations.

How can we read the reception and histories of the Kashmir and Paisley shawl as Orientalist?[13] How do they relate to Said's perception of Orientalist knowledge as the will to 'understand, in some cases control, manipulate, and even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different world?' How do these histories and the changing pattern of the plant motif (*buta*) itself correspond to the various kinds of power mentioned above - political, intellectual, cultural and moral? To begin with, the French interest in Kashmir shawls at the end of the eighteenth century coincides with the period that Said identifies as the birth of modern Orientalism. These finely woven textiles were already traded across Central Asia and the Middle East, but in 1798 when Napoleon returned

10 Ahmad, p.166.
11 see for example Hughes-Hallet, L. *Cleopatra: Histories, Dreams and Distortions*, Vintage, 1991. She only refers to Said in her chapter on the eighteenth and nineteenth century.
12 Said, p.12.
13 I am using the term Paisley here to indicate all European made imitation Kashmir shawls.

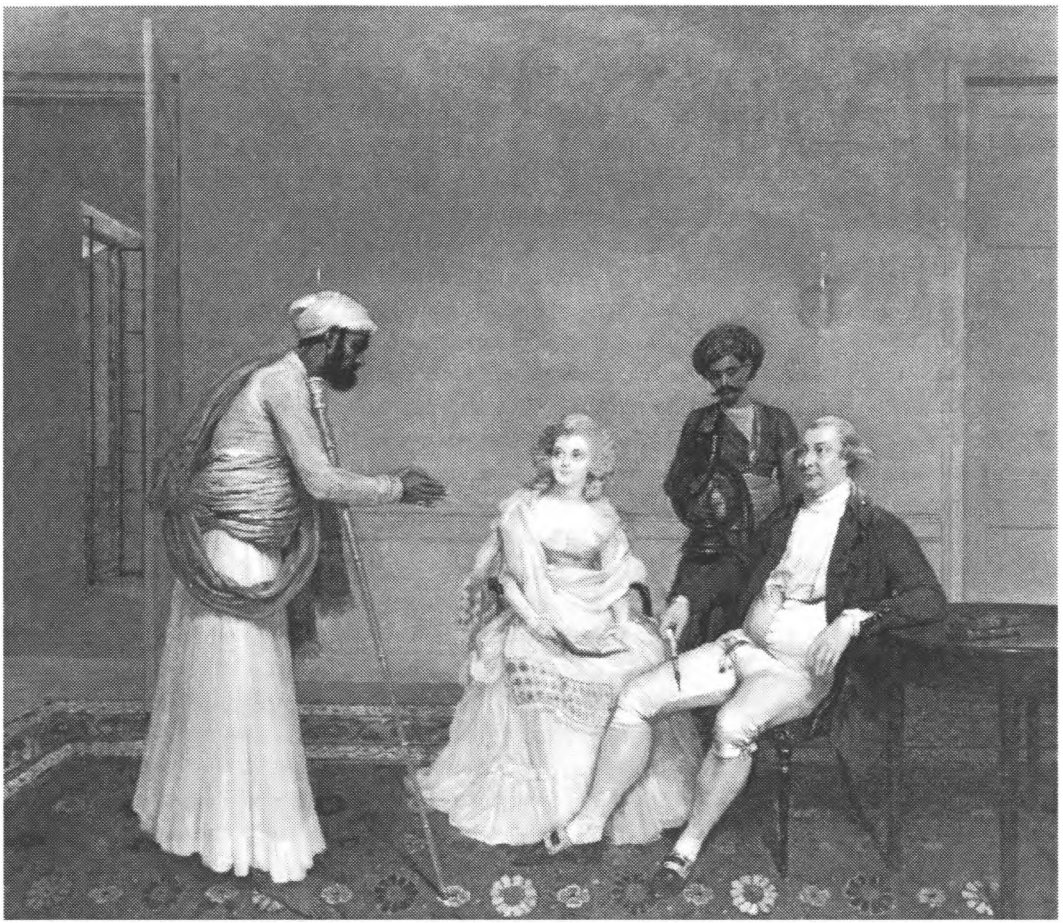


Fig 1 Arthur William Devis, 'Suetonius and Temperance Heatley' 1785-6.
By 1785, the East India Company had become embroiled in political rule of India. Here, the shawl (and the painting as a whole) act not only as an indication of interest in 'Oriental' culture but also as a symbol of European authority over all aspects of Indian life.
(Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusettes: James Phillip Gray Collection)

triumphant from Egypt, he brought with him a number of Kashmir shawls for his wife Josephine as part of his spoils of war. In spite of Josephine's initial dislike of these garments, they became the rage in France almost immediately. The *Journal des Dames et des Modes* of November 1798, singled out the Egyptian campaign as one of the key events which affected fashion.[14] The shawls clearly represented France's conquest and were part of a vogue for orientalist design which included chairs with legs carved liked the sphinx and ornamental obelisks.[15] It is clear that these shawls only became fashionable when they could operate as an indicator of Empire. As symbols of prestige a number of the elite chose to have their portraits painted while wearing their shawls. In Ingres'

14 Mackrell, A. *Shawls, Stoles and Scarves*, Batsford Ltd, London, 1986, p.42.

portrait of Mme. Riviere (1806), the Kashmir shawl is flaunted to such a degree, that it fills nearly a quarter of the canvas. It is also worth noting that Mme. Riviere was the grandchild of Barthelemy de Beauregard, who became governor of Ceylon in the eighteenth century; it is perhaps this connection which led to her desire to wear her Kashmir for posterity.

The fashion for shawls in England began earlier than in France though its spread was more gradual. This paralleled the nature of Britain's imperial dominance over India through the East India Company, which took place over a period of about one hundred and fifty years. As early as 1761, Captain John Foote of the East India Company had his portrait painted wearing Indian costume, including a Kashmir shawl. By 1785, the shawl had been taken up by fashionable women. Temperence Heatley, sister of Suetonius Heatley, who entered the service of the East India Company in 1766, had her portrait painted with her shawl displayed prominently across her lap. (Figure 1) The manufacture of shawls 'in imitation of the Indian' began in Edinburgh in 1777 and in Norwich in 1780. However, after 1798, these 'imitation Indian' shawls began to be produced for a mass market at Paisley. The burgeoning interest in these garments can be partly attributed to their signification of imperial grandeur. Thus, the Egyptian campaign of 1798, while not heralding the fashion in Britain, is thought to have encouraged it.[16]

Traditionally in the subcontinent, Kashmir shawls had always been perceived as objects of value, and were certainly used as symbols of status and power. Although there are conflicting views on the establishment of the industry - some believe it to have been established by Moghul rulers, while sixteenth century sources suggest that it had been established earlier[17] - it is clear that during Akbar's rule (1556-1605) and later, these garments were worn by the Emperor and other high ranking officials and were often given as gifts or bribes. During the period of the East India Company this tradition obviously continued. As Alison Carter mentions, the early officers of the East India Company returned to England with Kashmir shawls which far exceeded the quality of the later British exports and were most probably acquired as gifts.[18] The Kashmir shawl, already symbolic of power, was easily absorbed as a representation of increasing British dominance in the sub-continent. One example illustrates this perfectly. In 1846, when the British sold Kashmir to Maharaja Gulab Singh for £300,000, the transfer was conditional upon an annual tribute which included three shawls.[19] These shawls were lent annually by Queen Victoria to the Paisley manufacturers to aid their design.

The way in which the history of this exchange of diplomatic

15 Hughes-Hallet, p.21.
16 Blair, M. *The Paisley Shawl*, Alexander Gardner, Paisley, 1904, p.23.
17 Karpinski, C. 'Kashmir to Paisley' in *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, November 1963, p.119.
18 see Carter, A. 'Miscellaneous notes on Indian textiles', *The Textile Society Magazine*, vol.16, Autumn, 1991.
19 Irwin, J. *The Kashmir Shawl*, HMSO, London, 1973, p.24.
20 details are given in Irwin, p.10, and also in Karpinski, p.119.

gifts has been documented is also important in understanding the perpetuation of the Western Orientalist discourse. Orientalist scholars have highlighted an incident involving an English ambassador who refused a shawl from a Moghul ruler in 1616.[20] The implication of the story is that the upright and honest English gentleman refused to condone the corruption of the wily and dishonest 'Oriental' ruler. While this incident indicates a single instance of a bribe being refused, there is no estimation in any text of the number of shawls that were accepted as bribes by European officers, who were certainly not above corruption - and it is difficult to define the difference between a bribe and a gift in diplomatic circles. Since from the seventeenth century the Kashmir shawl had played a role in trading and diplomatic relations, the adoption of this garment as a symbol of imperial supremacy in Europe is, therefore, hardly surprising.

Through histories of the Kashmir and Paisley shawl, however, we can not only unravel the use of the shawl and its distinctive pattern as a symbol of cultural supremacy, but also trace the desire of European traders and manufacturers to control shawl production. In their attempt to control the development and production of Kashmir and imitation shawls, we can trace the way in which an Orientalist discourse exists in an exchange with the various kinds of power as Said describes: political, intellectual, cultural, moral (and I would add economic). Throughout this period, the British and the French attempted to gather information about the 'Orient' in order to appropriate aspects of 'Eastern' culture and assert supremacy. From the beginning of the fashion for shawls in Europe, the French and British were keen to attempt to undercut the Kashmiri manufacturers and produce these shawls in Europe, as they had already done with cotton cloth from Bengal. To reproduce the Kashmir shawl however, would have been to control the *crème de la crème* of textile production. These garments were produced from *pashmina* an extremely fine and soft wool, only found on the underbelly of a particular mountain goat from Tibet. The finest shawls were said to have been so delicate that they could be drawn through a ring. The patterns on the original shawls, were made using the twill tapestry weave, which involved weaving the weft threads that form the pattern, only around the warps where the particular colour was required for the design. This created a smoother surface than could have been obtained using embroidery. In the early shawls, as many as three hundred shades had been used.[21] With the increasing demand for such shawls, the Kashmir industry had already begun to adapt to European taste patterns, and the requirements for cheaper versions of this elite fabric.[22] Earlier shawls had taken as long as eighteen

21 Leavitt, T 'Fashion, Commerce and Technology in the Nineteenth Century' *Textile History*, Vol.3, 1972, p.54, citing Gilroy, C.G. *The Art of Weaving*, 1844 p.275.

months to weave. The time required for the production of such quality increased the retail price. With the demand for cheapness, an increasing number were embroidered and the number of colours used on the most elaborate was reduced to about fifty and more were made in smaller pieces that could be sewn together and therefore produced in a shorter space of time. These were known as the patchwork shawls. In spite of these changes, the shawls remained prohibitively expensive for many - costing between £100-£300 in Europe; this was also, of course, part of their charm.

By end of the eighteenth century, various members of the East India Company and the British Government attempted to gather information on both the shawl and its manufacture, as well as the breeding and naturalization in Britain of the particular mountain goat. Just as Napoleon equipped himself with an army of savants in Egypt, so in India, over a longer period, information was collected on all aspects of Indian life, culture, and geography in order to facilitate the maintenance of British control - the shawl was a tiny part of a vast process.[23] The most prolific collector of information about the Kashmir shawl was William Moorcroft, a veterinary surgeon and superintendent of the East India Company's military core. In 1812 he was sent on a trip across the Himalayas in search of a particular breed of horse. He returned, however, with 50 shawl goats, the naturalization of which had already been recognised in 1808 by the Board of Agriculture as offering 'richer prize to our manufacture than the acquisition of the golden fleece'.[24] Moorcroft shipped the goats to England, but the vessel with the female goats was wrecked with the loss of all its cargo, and although the ship with the males arrived, most were either very sickly or had died and all had perished within a few months of arrival. This was not the only attempt by traders and agents to transport and acclimatise these goats in either Britain or France. However, none were successful. Attempts were also made by the East India Company, under pressure from British shawl manufacturers, to export bales of wool. However, the few bales that were shipped to Britain between 1821 and 1823 had become so thickly felted with coarse hairs that they could not be economically separated. Moorcroft, who seems to have become obsessed with the development of a British shawl industry at the expense of Kashmir, attempted to encourage another feature of the Kashmir industry - high quality craftsmanship. He suggested the emigration of whole families' of spinners, weavers, and pattern drawers to Britain, although this plan never came to fruition. On his trip to Kashmir in 1822, he collected more manageable sources of information, in the form of thirty four shawl patterns to aid the British shawl manufacturers.[25]

22 Irwin, p.14.
23 see Richards, T. *The Imperial Archive*, Verso, 1993.
24 Irwin, p.22 citing Bakewell, R. *Observations on the influence of soil and climate upon wool*, Board of Agriculture, London, 1808, pp.108-9.

The British shawl manufacturers were never able to compete with Kashmir on quality. Instead, they concentrated on producing cheaper mass produced examples. For Paisley in particular, the aim was always to corner the market rather than provide innovation or quality. They ruthlessly undercut their rivals in Norwich and Edinburgh through cheap labour and the wholesale lifting of shawl designs from their rivals, although the main source of designs remained Kashmir. It is said that the Paisley agents in London would copy the Kashmir shawls immediately upon their arrival in London, dispatch them to Paisley in order to have imitation shawls of the latest patterns back in London eight days later. In addition the British aim was not just to sell these shawls in Britain or Europe, but world-wide. By around 1820 they had succeeded in destroying the Bengal cotton industry, renowned for its fine quality products, by flooding the market with cheaper importantly, mechanically-spun yarns. There was no reason in their minds why they would not succeed with shawls. In this too, Moorcroft played his part. In a letter written from India in 1820 he recounts the following incident, indicating that he took Paisley shawls with him on his trip to Kashmir:

> At first sight the Shawl Merchants of this country were deceived, but on handling them a look of surprise spread over their countenances, and on closer examination they discovered that the shawls were not of Kashmeeree fabric. They gave great credit to the British artists for their close imitations, but considered them as inferior to the Kashmeeree originals, and exhibited substantial reasons in support of their opinion.[26]

As the British and European trade developed, certain stylistic elements also began to change, not just in Europe, but also in Kashmir, due to the influence of European perceptions of the Orient. These changes and European influences were and are written about as 'improvements' to the original designs and as indicators of Europe's eventual supremacy in shawl design. While Irwin references B.H.Baden Powell and qualifies the suggestion that the French sent a mission to Kashmir to 'improve' traditional designs, Karpinski and Rossbach discuss so-called improvements with no such qualifications.[27] We can read these 'improvements' as part of the cultural arrogance and the process of cultural appropriation in the Orientalist project. In *The Art of Paisley*, for example, Rossbach writes: 'Without any humility the Europeans , in about 1850, started to demand improvements in the Cashmere designs to bring them up to European taste standards.'[28] Rossbach suggests that the Indian weavers copied European patterns 'often

25 Eight of these patterns survive and are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. They are reproduced in Irwin (1973) and Karpinski (1964).
26 cited in Irwin, p.20.
27 Rossbach, E. *The Art of Paisley*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York & London, 1980, p.15 and Karpinski, p.120.
28 Rossbach, p.15.

not comprehending the meaning of what they were copying.' Such ideas link with racist concepts of the inability of these weavers to innovate and develop designs and highlights the way in which Eastern art was regarded and written about in Britain at this time. One of the most prevalent ideas was the notion that non-European art was dominated by an interest in sensuous patterns as opposed to the influence of intellect in Western art which gave Western art and design added significance.

In analysing how all classes of European society viewed non-European design, it is worth examining the views of William Morris and Owen Jones. William Morris, who borrowed and appropriated design concepts almost wholesale from Persian and Indian textiles and carpets, described 'Eastern' design as 'uncivilised', because it was primarily concerned, in Morris' view, with pattern - patterns that were simply decorative, unrestrained and had no meaning. He asserted that 'to have a meaning and to make others feel and understand it, must ever be the aim and end of our Western art'. Morris even went as far as to suggest that it was a moral question in art.[29] His conclusions about 'Eastern' art cannot simply be attributed to his ignorance about this work. He clearly associated the cultural production of the 'East', with the concepts of 'racial' hierarchy dominant during his life time. By drawing on the question of morality, Morris reinforced the idea of the 'Orient' as a place without the restraints of the 'rational' world. In doing so he reinforced the image of the Orient as a place of physical and sexual abandon, a form of representation that countless Orientalist painters had constructed in their art and in their imagination (see for example Delacroix's *The Death of Sardanapolis* (1827) or Ingres *The Turkish Bath* (1862)).

Owen Jones in his *Grammar of Ornament*, while recognising the brilliance of Arabian and other ornamentation, underpinned Morris' ideas of the insignificance of such artistic products in contrast to the weight of European painting. Jones, in typical Orientalist fashion, presented no historical development of the non-European styles which he discussed. They are left as static and unchanging in contrast to the European patterns which he broke down into historical periods. This idea of stasis allowed English designers to borrow from the non-European world and yet present their work as invigorating something that was dead and decaying. As Said noted, Orientalism does not simply involve a will or intention to control, understand and manipulate it also incorporates the knowledge and culture from a 'manifestly different world'. Such an approach to design can be seen in British attitudes towards Kashmir and Paisley shawls.

While Kashmir shawls were admired for their exquisite quality,

29 see Boe, A. *From Gothic Revival to Functional Form: A Study in Victorian Theories of Design*, Da Capo Press, New York, 1979, pp.117-118.

the Orientalist approach to Eastern arts as less developed, unchanging and morally questionable led to countless descriptions of them in terms such as those used in Household Words in 1852:

> If an article of dress could be immutable, it would be the shawl; designed for eternity in the unchanging East; copied from patterns which are the heirlooms of caste; and woven by fatalists, to be worn by adorers of the ancient garment, who resent the idea of the smallest change....[30]

This kind of construction belied the true character of the Kashmir shawl as a living and developing tradition. In *The Kashmir Shawl*, Irwin does trace the development of the buta pattern, which is most identified with the Kashmir shawl. The pattern is thought to be of Persian origin, although it has been suggested that this design originated in India.[31] From a slender flowering plant motif in the late seventeenth century, the pattern changed to become more stylised and firmer in shape during the eighteenth century with an increasing number of flowers. It also merged with another Indo-Persian decorative motif - the vase of flowers - and by the end of the eighteenth century had begun to have a well-defined formal shape, known in the west as the pine motif and in India as the ambi (mango) because of the characteristic curve at the top of it (see Figure 1). In the nineteenth century this shape began to be increasingly conventionalised; by the 1850s and 1860s, it had changed again to become increasingly florid in character.

Many of these later Kashmir shawls formed the basis for pattern design at Paisley, where the florid nature of the design became even more elaborate and sensuous. This indicates that the increasing sensuous representation of the buta was at least partly the result of European perceptions of Eastern design and culture. It is clear that European merchants also set out to influence and alter the original Kashmir designs. Mr. W. Simpson, an English water-colourist, visited Kashmir in 1860, to paint the shawl weavers and embroiderers, and described the following changes:

> The French patterns were perhaps purer than the old; they contained more free and sweeping lines, but they wanted the mediaeval richness of the native taste. It may be described as the difference between a piece of Rococo ornament and what an artist of the thirteenth century would have produced. There was a distinguishing character about the original style which is being rubbed out by this foreign influence.[32]

Apart from relegating the traditional Kashmir designs to a period

30 cited in Irwin, pp.14-15.
31 Irwin, pp.11-12.
32 Simpson, W. *India, Ancient and Modern*, Day & Sons Ltd. London, 1967, p.5.

of the distant past, in contrast to the French designs which he associates with a more recent past (important in a period dominated by enlightenment ideas of progress), Simpson's statement also encouraged a view of the traditional designs as unchanging. The nostalgia present in his view is similar to that which can be detected in comments about Britain as a pre-industrial society. Simpson's description also highlights the formality and order which existed in the 'traditional' Kashmir patterns, in contrast to the later florid styles which appear to have developed through European intervention. I would like to suggest that these changes were part of the development of an image of exotica and sensuality of the East which Orientalist artists and academics had constructed. This was the 'taste standard' which, according to Rossbach, they wanted to indulge. For Europe, this pattern epitomised 'the East'. The formality and order of the earlier Kashmir designs did not fit the Europeanised image of the 'Orient' well enough. The florid European-influenced designs exude the extravagance, sensuality and indulgence with which Orientalist scholars and artists had coded the 'Orient'. In this way the Kashmir shawl was almost literally moulded into a European expression of the East.

Europeans certainly invested the *buta* with countless meanings which writers suggested related to the 'Oriental' use of this form. Matthew Blair, for example, writing a generation after the collapse of the Paisley industry, stated that

> The Hindoo is essentially a religious man, and a mystic. Religion, in form at least, colours all his life, and affects his art. He is continually symbolising ideas, and incarnating the attributes of his gods, and as the Indian craftsman was in most cases his own designer, he worked in with the needle the symbolic forms of the ideas which governed his life.

The pine form, signifying fertility, reproduction, abundance, was continually introduced into decorative work, whether sacred or secular.[33] This passage asserts the notion of the East as superstitious and unscientific. The probable origin of the ambi from the Islamic world as well as the dominance of Muslims in Kashmir, is an immediate indication of Blair's construction of meaning. Wild interpretations of the pattern's meaning can also be seen through the text for an exhibition of Paisley and Kashmir shawls which took place at the Commonwealth Institute in 1986. In the exhibition, the 'ambi'/'paisley' pattern was likened to a sperm shape through fragrant phrases such as: 'from the flower of our reproductive male energy to the vastness of the comets in the

33 Blair, p.30.

expanding universe', and 'a gigantic ball of masculine elements'.[34]

These fantasies of meaning which alluded to sensuality and sexuality could be indulged, whether wearing an original Kashmir or a cheap Paisley printed shawl. All classes in Britain were able to take part in this exotic and Imperial exercise. As Ed Rossbach asserts on the first page of his nostalgic account of Paisley shawls: 'Ordinary people were pleased to have worn garments such as even the Queen was said to have worn.'[35] He continues by recounting how the Paisley shawl was worn on ceremonial occasions such as birth, marriage and death. 'Paisley shawls were far more than a fashion; they were ceremonial garments with a significance understood throughout society.' Rossbach does not venture to explain what this 'significance' may be, and continues by asserting that these textiles gave the women who wore them 'a sense of identity'.[36] That identity, as we have seen, was tied to Empire and a sense of national and racial superiority. The imperial image with which the imitation shawls, in particular, were imbued, can be seen in another of Rossbach's nostalgic yet revealing comments:

> The size of these textiles, their full, heavy color and density of pattern, their fringes, make them seem substantial and important. While the shawls inevitably speak of their time, they speak also of something earlier, more distant. People describe them uncertainly as Persian or Indian. The Victorianism is mingled with the foreign. The shawls seem confusingly exotic, just as they did when they were new.[37]

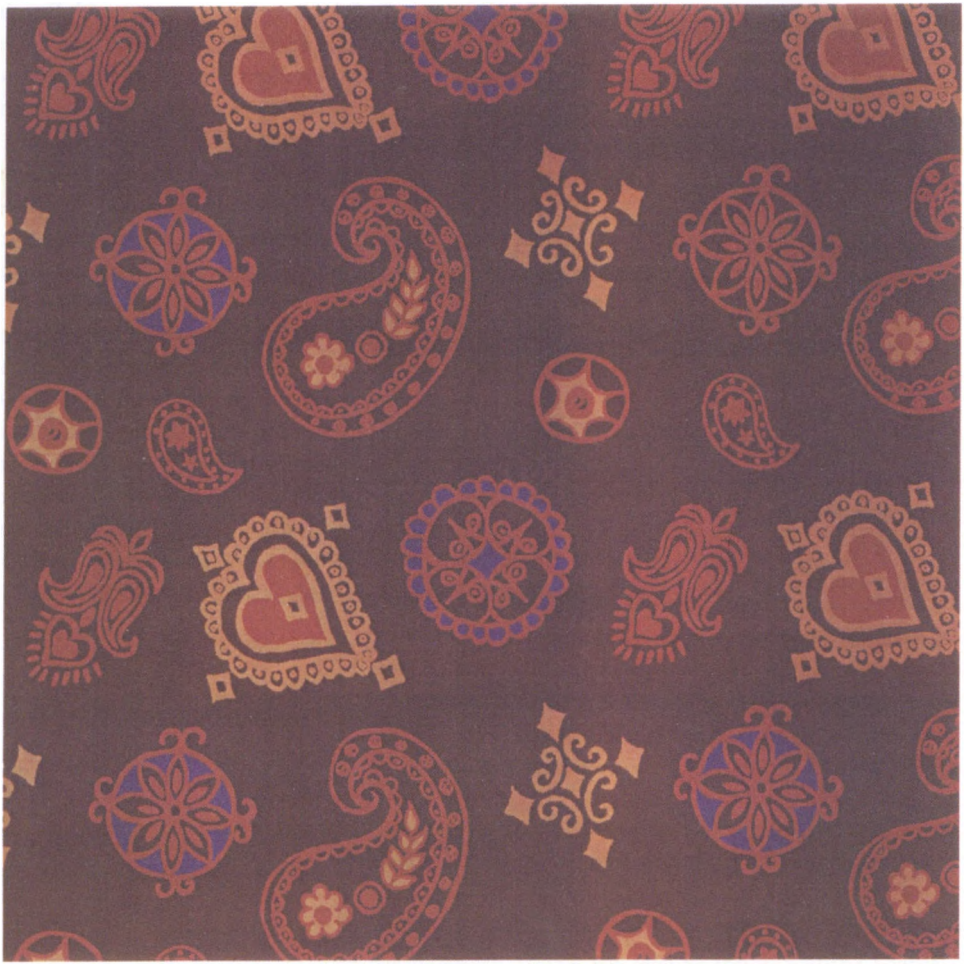
Rossbach identifies Victorianism as 'Europe's surge towards the technological?'[38] It is this technology that he believes distinguishes the Paisley textiles from their 'Asian models'. The pitting of West as technological versus the East as not is another example of an Orientalist construct that has affected the writing of some textile histories. Ironically, William Morris' textiles, produced in ways to challenge encroaching industrialisation, are similar to some Paisley designs because of the Indo-Persian influence prevalent in his work. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Victorianism[39] was dependent on the foreign for its very existence. The development of Europe's industrialisation was dependent on the establishment of an Empire both for raw materials and markets. In more ways than one, Empire was an intrinsic part of Victorian culture. The so-called Paisley pattern, while being identified with exoticism, also appears to express an image of Englishness. This identity has partly been encouraged by the way in which stores such as Liberty's, perceived as English in identity have promoted

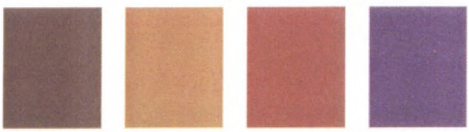
34 Munby, Z 'A Blossoming of the Male Ego' in *Textile Society Newsletter*, Vol.6, Summer, 1986 p.24.
35 Rossbach, p.7.
36 Ibid., p.8.
37 Ibid., p.9.
38 Rossbach, p.120.
39 Victorian culture is very often seen in terms of industrialisation and urbanisation. These two processes, however cannot be disentangled from England's Imperial expansionism both within Britain and abroad.

vogues for Oriental design. Such stores and their trade, however were linked to the development of Imperial trade. In this sense it was not just Victorianism which became synonymous with Empire at this time, but the whole concept of Englishness itself. The cultural appropriation and imperialism within the history of shawls, was completed by the name of terms *buta* or *ambi*, being renamed after a small, ironically, *Scottish* village called Paisley.

Today, associations with Empire and exoticism also linger on. The pattern is still used as a short hand for exoticism. In *Paisley Patterns*, Valerie Reilly has commented on the particular revival of interest in the pattern during 1988 and 1989. We can see examples of this revival in both mass produced and designer textiles (see Plate 15). 'Ethnic, ethnic everywhere' is how Katherine Hamnett described the craze for Indian and other non-European designs in the late 1980s.[40] It was this period which others such as Tanya Wollen identified as a period of economic crisis that led to a revival of interest in Empire.[41] Nostalgic English TV series such as Brideshead Revisited were broadcast side by side with series such as the Raj Quartet. Once again images of Victorianism and Empire; images of Englishness and Empire, went inextricably hand in hand, as they had in the Paisley shawl almost a century earlier.

40 Maharaj, S, 'Arachne's Genre: Towards Inter-Cultural Studies in Textiles', *Journal of Design History*, Vol.4, No.2, 1991, p.91.
41 Woolen, T. 'Over our shoulders: nostalgic screen fictions for the 1980s', in Corner, C. and Harvey, S. (eds) *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture*, Routledge, London, 1991.





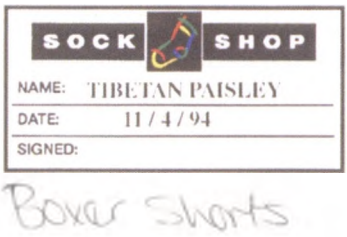


Plate 15 'Tibetan paisley' Boxer Shorts (1994) 'Sock Shop is a fun/ innovative design led business who do not stock paisley designs usually as they tend to be conservative for our customers' (Kerrie Davies, Regional Manager, North). In 1990 and 1994 however, at times of interest in exoticism, they have produced paisley designs.
(Courtesy: Sock Shop Holdings Company)